

September 3, 2009



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Dear Friend,

The four face-to-face town halls I held throughout the month and the tele town hall that followed were among the most engaging and exciting conversations I've taken part in for quite some time. It was a privilege to participate in the debate and hear the full spectrum of points of view firsthand. In fact, there is no substitute for an open exchange of ideas.



By 5:00 pm already 500 people were lined up for the town hall in Rancho Cordova. More than a thousand people in all were able to participate.

Health care reform is a very personal issue and must be examined with that in mind. I think it's fair to say the passionate public reaction across the country came as a surprise to the authors of the House and Senate measures, but it

shouldn't have. Ironically, there is much we can learn from doctors about listening and we in the Congress must be great listeners now as we proceed down the path of health care reform.

That's why during the District Work Period I seized every opportunity to listen at the town halls, during my travels to visit health care providers, and over the telephone as thousands of you took me up on the invitation to express your opinions on health care.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our town hall community partners in Alpine County, Citrus Heights, Jackson and Rancho Cordova. Under pressure and unusual circumstances, we were able to conduct civil and productive meetings with thousands of constituents in August. Furthermore, I want to compliment those who attended for their calm and courteous discourse, for staying on point and providing me valuable information as we move forward.

The events of

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THE EVENTS OF Wednesday, Aug. 26, were cases in point. We started the day in tiny Markleeville under blue skies and a shelter at Turtle Rock Park. To our delight, 60 of the county's

1,200-population had taken the time to shower us with home-made snacks—and lots of questions about health care reform. Later that evening we moved on to Rancho Cordova where we were expecting a crowd larger than the entire population of Alpine County.

Armed with the knowledge and experience of the previous week's turnouts at town halls in Citrus Heights (Aug. 18) and Jackson (Aug. 22), our staff –working with Rancho Cordova officials—pulled out all the stops. City officials and police had even gone so far as to rehearse their preparations the previous night, and it really paid off. By 5 p.m. Wednesday, the day of the town hall, 500 people were queued up waiting at City Hall.

When the doors opened at 6:30 p.m., the city hall chambers filled up in a hurry. The American River Room just down the hall had a huge TV screen that carried the events going on across the hall. My staff had microphones that patched into the main meeting, so in all 725 guests were having virtually the same town hall experience.



Congressman Lungren listens to residents of California's Third District regarding health care reform legislation.

That said, we were able to broadcast the indoor proceedings to those who were still outside the building with the help of outdoor speakers. My staff included the "outdoor" group in the Question and Answer rotation: (1) City Hall Chambers;

(2) American River Room (3) Outdoors. Though some people were disappointed they couldn't get in the doors, a majority complimented us on our efforts to involve as many people as possible. At the conclusion I went outside and spoke with those who remained.

These town hall discussions were as spirited as any you would have joined in across the country. Here are a few points I believe represent the majority, followed by some ideas I introduced that were well received:

1. There was negative reaction to ideas associated with a "public option."
2. There was deep concern new government directives

regular e-mail updates  
from my office to your  
e-mail account.

- would interfere in the doctor-patient relationship.
3. The prohibitive cost of the program seemed indefensible—especially now.

Constituents were receptive to these ideas:

1. The present health care system would benefit from more transparency: more information about provider costs and their effectiveness. The better informed the health care consumer, the more providers will have to compete.
2. More options and choices: opportunities to join bigger coverage pools and associations; the right to buy health care insurance outside of California.

I will be investigating all these matters next week when the House returns to session. I hope you will continue to contact me while I am in Washington.

Sincerely,



Daniel E. Lungren  
Member of Congress

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☐ No

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